



## INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

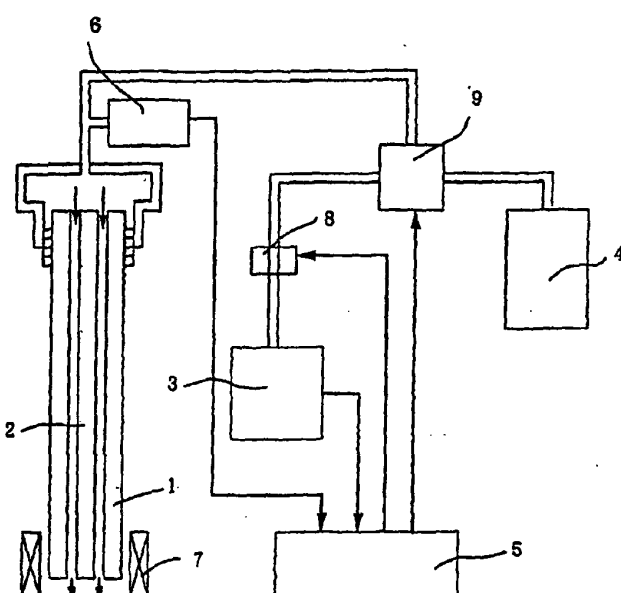
(51) International Patent Classification: <b>C03B 37/012, C03B 23/207</b>	<b>A1</b>	(11) International Publication Number: <b>WO 00/27766</b> (43) International Publication Date: 18 May 2000 (18.05.2000)
(21) International Application Number: <b>PCT/EP99/08538</b> (22) International Filing Date: <b>08 November 1999 (08.11.1999)</b> (30) Priority Data: 10/317981     09 November 1998 (09.11.1998) JP (60) Parent Application or Grant HERAEUS QUARZGLAS GMBH & CO. KG [/]; O. SHIN- ETSU QUARTZ PRODUCTS CO., LTD. [/]; O. SUZUKI, Masanori [/]; O. KATO, Toshiyuki [/]; O. SHIMADA, Atsuh [/]; O. WATABE, Yutaka [/]; O. SUZUKI, Masanori [/]; O. KATO, Toshiyuki [/]; O. SHIMADA, Atsuh O. WATABE, Yutaka [/]; O. KÜHN, Hans-Christian ; O.	<b>Published</b>	
(54) Title: <b>METHOD FOR PRODUCING OPTICAL FIBER PREFORM</b> (54) Titre: <b>PROCEDE DE PRODUCTION D'UNE PREFORME DE FIBRE OPTIQUE</b>  (57) Abstract <p>An object of the present invention is to provide a method for producing a favorable optical fiber preform at a low cost, which comprises favorably changing from a gas supply state to a reduced pressure state, and thereby acquiring a long effective length of the quartz glass tube. The above problems are solved by a method for producing an optical fiber preform comprising inserting a core glass rod for use in the optical fiber preform into the quartz glass tube for the optical fiber preform and then welding them in a heating furnace for melt welding them together into a monolithic product, characterized in that the melting is started in such a state that the lower open edge of said quartz glass tube is placed inside the heating furnace and a gas is supplied from the upper edge of the tube, and after the lower edge portion of the quartz glass tube is drawn out from said heating furnace by melt deformation and stretching by the gravitational force, the gas supply is cut off and the pressure is reduced.</p> (57) Abrégé <p>L'invention concerne un procédé de production d'une préforme de fibre optique avantageuse à prix réduit. Ce procédé consiste à passer de façon avantageuse d'un état d'approvisionnement gazeux à un état à pression réduite et, par conséquent, à acquérir une longueur à efficacité prolongée du tube en verre de silice. Les problèmes mentionnés ci-dessus sont résolus par un procédé de production d'une préforme de fibre optique qui consiste à insérer dans le tube en verre de silice destiné à la préforme de fibre optique une baguette de verre destinée à être utilisée dans la préforme de fibre optique, puis à les souder les uns aux autres de façon à obtenir un produit monolithique. Ce dernier est caractérisé en ce que la fusion démarre dans un état dans lequel le bord ouvert inférieur dudit tube en verre de silice est disposé dans le four de réchauffage et un gaz est amené par le bord supérieur du tube. Après le retrait du bord inférieur du tube en verre de silice hors du four de réchauffage par déformation due à la fusion et par allongement due à la force de gravité, l'alimentation en gaz est coupée et la pression réduite.</p>		

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(54) Title: METHOD FOR PRODUCING OPTICAL FIBER PREFORM			
(57) Abstract			
<p>An object of the present invention is to provide a method for producing a favorable optical fiber preform at a low cost, which comprises favorably changing from a gas supply state to a reduced pressure state, and thereby acquiring a long effective length of the quartz glass tube. The above problems are solved by a method for producing an optical fiber preform comprising inserting a core glass rod for use in the optical fiber preform into the quartz glass tube for the optical fiber preform and then welding them in a heating furnace for melt welding them together into a monolithic product, characterized in that the melting is started in such a state that the lower open edge of said quartz glass tube is placed inside the heating furnace and a gas is supplied from the upper edge of the tube, and after the lower edge portion of the quartz glass tube is drawn out from said heating furnace by melt deformation and stretching by the gravitational force, the gas supply is cut off and the pressure is reduced.</p>			
			

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**Method for Producing Optical Fiber Preform**

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**Detailed Description of the Invention**

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Industrial Field of Application

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The present invention relates to a method for producing an optical fiber preform; in further detail to a method for producing an optical fiber preform which enables high quality optical fibers at a low cost, and it comprises melt welding the quartz glass tube for use in the optical fiber preform with the core glass rod for use in the optical fiber preform to obtain a monolithic product by switching from a pressurized state to a reduced pressure state.

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Prior Art

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Recently, mass production and the cost reduction of optical fibers are keenly demanded with increasing use of optical fibers in larger quantity. The mass production and cost reduction in the production of optical fibers can be accomplished most simply by forming a large optical fiber preform and by then drawing it. In the conventional practical method for producing optical fibers such as the vapor-phase axial deposition process (VAD) or the outer vapor-phase deposition process (OVD process), the core portion and the clad portion are all produced by VAD or OVD process. Thus, in case of scaling up, there was a disadvantage that the productivity of the fiber optical preform may be lowered. Furthermore, if it is tried to form a larger soot body (that is a

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precursor for an optical fiber preform which is a porous body obtained before vitrifying it into a transparent body), there may occur troubles such as the generation of cracks or the drop off of the porous soot body as to greatly lower the productivity. As a method for producing an optical fiber which overcomes the problems above, in JP-A-7-109136 and the like is proposed a production method, i.e., the so-called rod in tube method, which comprises forming the quartz glass tube for use as the clad portion accounting for 80 % or more of the cross section area by a method capable of forming a high performance quartz glass tube and yet, of reducing cost, and then monolithically integrating the resulting quartz glass tube with the core glass rod formed by, for example, the VAD process or the OVD method. In the rod in tube method, in general, a gas is flown in the interstices between the quartz glass tube for optical fiber preform and the core glass rod for the optical fiber preform to prevent impurities and the like from being incorporated therein, or to control the OH groups (see JP-A-52-200042, JP-A-4-42848, JP-A-6-42848, and JP-A-6-21725). On the other hand, because the melt welding into a monolithic body should be performed under a reduced pressure, one end of the quartz tube for preforms must be sealed and the pressure be reduced before the melt welding. The maintenance of the pressure-reduced state is exemplified in, for example JP-A-7-196332 or JP-A-8-277138.

#### Problems the Invention is to Solve

For the cost reduction in the rod in tube method, it is essential to effectively use the quartz glass tube for optical fiber preforms without making any loss, and it is therefore preferred to initiate the heat melting of the quartz glass tube for optical fiber preform from a portion as near as possible to the edge end of the quartz glass tube for optical fiber preforms. Furthermore, because the quartz glass tube for optical fiber preforms is expensive, generally, a dummy tube is used after the melt welding is performed to obtain a monolithic body for the portion before the dimension becomes stable as the optical fiber preform. The dummy tube is a tube that is connected to the quartz tube for optical fiber preforms above, and is made of an inexpensive quartz glass of a low quality such as those containing impurities, pores etc., at a large quantity; however, concerning the increase in total weight and the cost of the dummy tube itself, it is preferred that the dummy is provided at a length as short as possible and that the heat melting is initiated from the edge portion thereof. To satisfy this requirement, the lower end portion of the quartz glass tube for optical fiber preforms, or the lower end of the dummy tube in case of using the dummy tube, is placed in side the heating furnace during heating up to the initiation of heat melting. However, if heating is performed in this state, the atmosphere that is not clean inside the heating furnace enters into the quartz glass tube. Accordingly, it is necessary to supply a gas from the upper end portion of the quartz glass tube to maintain the inside of the tube clean.

5 On the other hand, in initiating the heating for melt welding the quartz glass tube for optical fiber  
preforms to obtain a monolithic product with the core glass rod for optical fiber preforms, the gas  
supply must be switched to reduce the pressure. However, this can be accomplished by sealing  
10 the end portion of the side from which melting is initiated. If the pressure reduction is started  
before sealing, particularly when the open end is still remaining inside the heating furnace, the  
atmosphere that is not clean inside the heating furnace is sucked into the tube. This produces  
an optical fiber preform in which the residual impurities or generated bubbles remain at the melt  
15 welded interface between the quartz glass tube and the core glass rod, and this results in an  
optical fiber having impaired properties. Thus, it is necessary to reduce the pressure after the  
end portion of the side from which melting is initiated is molten, stretched by gravitational force,  
and drawn out to the outside of the heating furnace from the lower side of the furnace. On the  
20 other hand the aperture area of the lower open end of the quartz glass tube for optical fiber  
preforms gradually decreases with progressive melting of the quartz glass tube due to the  
surface tension and the stretching in the longitudinal direction exerted by the gravitational force;  
however, in case of maintaining a constant pressure by using an ordinary regulator and the like  
25 or a gas supply using a flow control, the gas supply does not change even if the aperture  
portion is reduced by the melting of the quartz glass tube. Then, it happens that the portion just  
above the reduced aperture portion expands by the gas pressure, and this finally causes  
explosion. If the molten portion is observable, the gas supply rate can be reduced depending on  
30 the observed results, but it is difficult to observe the inside of the furnace.

In the light of the circumstances above, the present inventors intensively conducted studies, and  
it has been found out that the above problems can be overcome and that favorable optical fiber  
35 preforms can be produced at a low cost by measuring the pressure loss with respect to the gas  
supply in the interstices between the quartz glass tube and the core glass rod, and by then  
controlling the gas supply rate in such a manner that the pressure loss can be maintained  
constant. The present invention has been accomplished based on the above findings. That is:  
40 An object of the present invention is to provide a method for producing a favorable optical fiber  
preform at a low cost, which comprises favorably changing from gas supply state to a reduced  
pressure state, and thereby acquiring a long effective length of the quartz glass tube.

#### Means for Solving the Problems

50 The object above is accomplished by a method for producing an optical fiber preform, which is a  
production method for an optical fiber preform comprising inserting a core glass rod for use in

5 the optical fiber preform into the quartz glass tube for the optical fiber preform and then melting  
them in a vertical heating furnace for melt welding them together into a monolithic body,  
characterized in that the melting is started in such a state that the lower open edge of said  
10 quartz glass tube is placed inside the heating furnace and a gas is supplied from the upper  
edge or the tube, and after the lower edge portion of the quartz glass tube is drawn out from  
said heating furnace by melt deformation and stretching by gravitational force, the gas supply is  
cut off and the pressure is reduced.

15 As described above, the method for producing an optical fiber preform according to the present  
invention comprises starting melting in such a state that the lower open edge of said quartz  
glass tube is placed inside the heating furnace and a gas is supplied from the upper edge or the  
20 tube, and after the lower edge portion of the quartz glass tube is drawn out from said heating  
furnace by melt deformation and stretching by gravitational force, the gas supply is cut off and  
the pressure is reduced. The gas supply is preferably effected by measuring the fluctuation of  
the gas pressure by using a pressure measuring means provided in the vicinity of the upper  
25 open end of the quartz glass tube, and by then supplying the gas based on the measured  
values. By the control above, the positive pressure can be maintained constant even if the  
interstices between the quartz glass tube and the core glass rod is narrowed by melting. The  
switching from a positive pressure to the negative pressure is performed at the point the  
30 drawing out of the lower end portion of the quartz glass tube (or the lower end portion of the  
dummy tube in case a dummy tube is used) is recognized visually or by means of a detection  
sensor. Since the pressure is switched from a positive value to a negative value after the end  
portion of the side from which melting is initiated is drawn out of the heating furnace, the  
35 aperture area can be maintained sufficiently small and the viscosity can be sufficiently reduced.  
Hence, the suction of atmosphere can be prevented from occurring even if a sealed state should  
be immediately realized; thus, not only the contamination attributed to the contaminating  
substances inside the heating furnace can be avoided, but also the quartz glass tube can be  
40 effectively used free from any loss. The positive pressure referred above signifies a state in  
which the pressure is elevated to a value higher than the ordinary pressure by flowing a gas to  
the interstices between the quartz glass tube and the core glass rod, and, as the gas used  
therein, there can be mentioned a cleaning gas, a contamination preventing gas, a gas for  
45 controlling OH groups, etc.; more specifically, preferred are gases that do not impair the heating  
furnace, such as a clean N<sub>2</sub> gas, Ar<sub>2</sub> gas etc. The negative pressure as referred above signifies  
a state in which the pressure of the interstices between the quartz glass tube and the core glass  
rod is lowered to a value not higher than the ordinary pressure. The reduced pressure can be  
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5 realized by sealing the lower end portion of the quartz glass tube, and then sucking the gas and the like after connecting the upper end portion to a pressure reducing apparatus.

10 Mode for Carrying out the Invention

15 In Fig. 1 is shown a schematically drawn explanatory view for carrying out the method for producing an optical fiber preform. Referring to Fig. 1, a core glass rod 2 is inserted into a quartz glass tube 1, and the resulting product is fixed to a feeding mechanism (not shown) of a vertical apparatus for use in the rod in tube method. Then, the switching valve 9 is switched to a gas supply path to introduce a gas from the supply apparatus 3 into the quartz glass tube 1 from the upper side while discharging the gas from the lower side of the quartz glass tube 1 for optical fiber preforms. The initial value of the gas supply rate is determined from the amount of the gas necessary in accordance with the aperture area and the like of the quartz glass tube. Upon initiating the gas supply at the initial value, the signal of a pressure measuring apparatus 6 is transmitted to a control means 5 in such a manner that the measured value of the pressure measuring apparatus 6 is maintained at the supply rate. The control means 5 perform the control so as to send a signal to the flow rate control valve 8, thereby making the signal of the pressure measuring apparatus 6 constant. After starting heating, the lower end portion of the quartz glass tube 1 is molten and stretched by gravitational force, and is discharged from the lower side of the vertical heating furnace 7. The lower end portion of the quartz glass tube 1 discharged out of the furnace is then fixed to a preform drawing apparatus (not shown) of the vertical rod in tube apparatus. By means of the signal from the quartz glass tube detection sensor 10, the control means 5 detect that the lower end portion of the quartz glass tube is molten and discharged out from the lower side of the vertical heating furnace 7, and sends a signal to the flow rate control valve 8 and the switching valve 9 to stop the gas supply and to switch into the pressure reduced state by means of a evacuating system 4. The evacuating system 4 need not to receive the signal from the control means 5 if the evacuating system is operated beforehand, but the operation may be initiated upon receiving a signal from the control means 5 to start the pressure reduction at the same time of switching the switching valve 9. Otherwise, because it is possible to observe the point at which the quartz glass tube is discharged out from the furnace, the detection sensor 10 can be omitted to manually switch the gas supply to a pressure reduced state.

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Effect of the Invention

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In the production method according to the present invention, the gas supply state before initiating melt welding is smoothly changed to the reduced pressure state after starting melt welding. Thus, by preventing the expansion of the portion just above the reduced aperture portion of the quartz glass tube before starting melt welding and by flowing a gas until the quartz glass tube is sealed by melt welding, the contamination of the product due to contaminating substances can be prevented from occurring. As a result, an optical fiber preform free from incorporation of bubbles and foreign matter in the interface can be obtained.

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## Claims

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**Claims**

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1. A method for producing an optical fiber preform comprising inserting a core glass rod for use in the optical fiber preform into the quartz glass tube for the optical fiber preform and then welding them in a heating furnace for melt welding them together into a monolithic product, characterized in that the melting is started in such a state that the lower open edge of said quartz glass tube is placed inside the heating furnace and a gas is supplied from the upper edge of the tube, and after the lower edge portion of the quartz glass tube is drawn out from said heating furnace by melt deformation and stretching by the gravitational force, the gas supply is cut off and the pressure is reduced.

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2. A method for producing an optical fiber preform as claimed in claim 1, wherein the gas supply is controlled based on a means for measuring the pressure provided in the vicinity of the upper edge of the quartz glass tube for use in the optical fiber preform.

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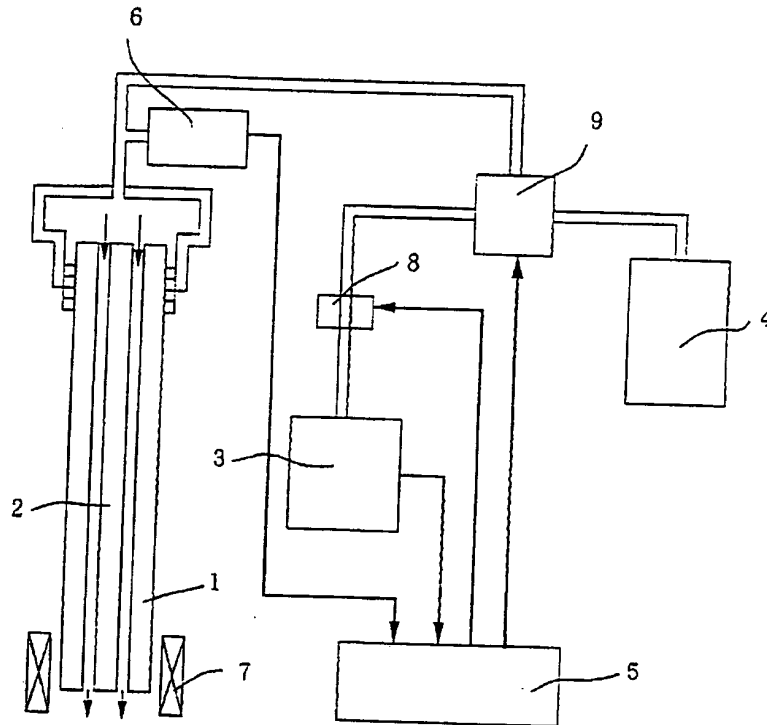
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Fig. 1



# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No  
PCT/EP 99/08538

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER  
IPC 7 C03B37/012 C03B23/207

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

## B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)  
IPC 7 C03B

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

## C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	WO 98 43921 A (SAMSUNG ELECTRONICS CO.LTD.) 8 October 1998 (1998-10-08) the whole document	1
A	PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 5, no. 35 (C-46) '707!, 5 March 1981 (1981-03-05) & JP 55 162441 A (NIPPON DENSHIN DENWA KOSHA), 17 December 1980 (1980-12-17) abstract	1

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

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Authorized officer

Van den Bossche, W

# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

Int. Application No  
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Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
WO 9843921 A	08-10-1998	AU 6524498 A	22-10-1998
JP 55162441 A	17-12-1980	NONE	